



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
Department of Agricultural Resources
251 Causeway Street, Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114
617-626-1700 fax 617-626-1850 www.Mass.gov/AGR



MITT ROMNEY
Governor

KERRY HEALEY
Lieutenant Governor

ROBERT W. GOLLEDGE, JR.
Secretary

DOUGLAS P. GILLESPIE
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 27, 2006

Contact: Vanessa Gulati
617-626-1119

LOCALLY GROWN SPINACH A GOOD CHOICE

Locally grown spinach sold at Massachusetts farmer's markets, farmstands and supermarkets has not been implicated in the recent *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak in spinach. The outbreak has been sourced specifically to bagged spinach from California.

"The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources has asked growers to voluntarily label their spinach to make it clear that the product has been grown locally," said Douglas P. Gillespie, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR).

"The Farmer's Market industry in Massachusetts requires that products sold must be locally grown," reported Jeff Cole, Executive Director of the Federation of Massachusetts Farmers' Markets (FMFM). "We have seen a tremendous demand for spinach at local markets, customers ask for it everyday." "I'm grateful to see that consumers relate to local production and see it as a safe and healthy alternative."

Typically, locally grown spinach is not sold in bags. In the past few years, the FMFM, Massachusetts Association of Roadside Stands, New England Vegetable Growers Association, UMass Extension and the MDAR have provided statewide grower workshops on Good Agricultural Practices, which include guidelines for food safety.

Visit the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources' website for listings of farmstands and farmers' markets: <http://www.mass.gov/agr/markets/farmersmarkets/> <http://www.mass.gov/agr/markets/farmstands/>

The FDA recommends that all produce be washed. Like greens, spinach should be washed after purchase. Loose spinach can be gritty since it grows in sandy soils that often cling to the growing leaves. Put the spinach into the sink or a large container of cold water. Twist or cut the stems off and immerse the leaves in water. Swish the leaves around and let them stand for a few minutes while the sand sinks to the bottom. Dry by using a salad spinner or by blotting with paper towels. Wrap in dry paper towels and seal in a plastic bag for storage.

If consumers have any concerns, cooking fresh spinach can destroy bacteria. Bacteria in spinach, including *E. coli* O157:H7, can be killed by cooking at 160 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 seconds. Remember to take steps to avoid cross-contamination of the fresh spinach with other foods and food contact surfaces and to wash hands, utensils, and surfaces with hot, soapy water before and after handling the spinach.

###